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EVOLUTION'S

Unreasonable Assumptions

Genetic Entropy

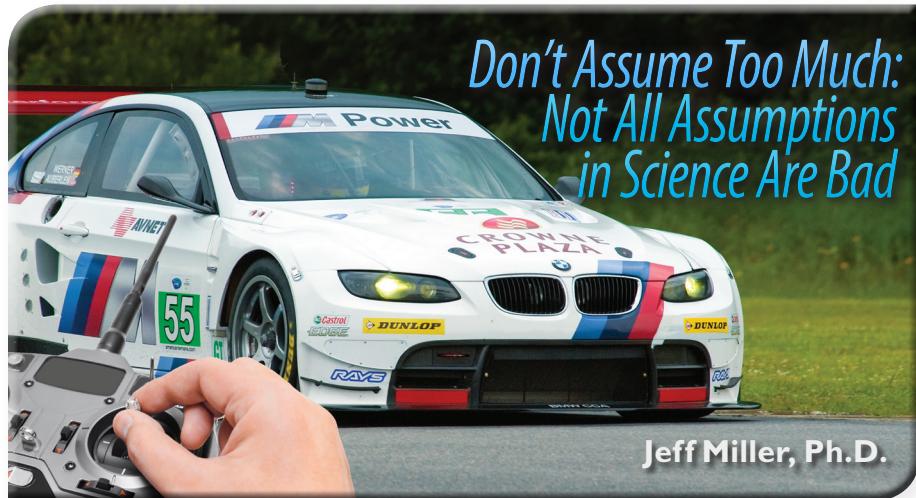
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**Evolution Driven by Lust
for Headlines**

Can God Do Anything?



Don't Assume Too Much: Not All Assumptions in Science Are Bad

Jeff Miller, Ph.D.

It might be tempting to get the wrong impression and think that making assumptions in science is a bad practice, especially upon reading various writings from the creationist community. Creation scientists, for instance, correctly relate many of the problems inherent in the assumptions of evolutionary geologic dating techniques that tend to yield extremely old ages for the items they test. But do not fall victim to the same fallacy that the evolutionary community makes in assuming too much. As is the case with the fact that scientific theories can be good things (see Miller, 2012b), the practice of making assumptions in science also can be a good thing.

A Scientific Assumption in Practice

Consider a real-world example from the engineering field. Let's say I want to design a remote control vehicle to be used on a one mile strip of paved road. The road has been blocked off for my use, and I have maintained the road well, re-paving it when necessary. I have constructed fences around the road to keep animals off of it, and I check the road regularly to make sure that it is smooth and clear. The remote control vehicle is equipped with the necessary sensors that will allow me to keep track of its velocity and heading at all times, since I will be controlling the car from a building several miles away from the strip of road.

With all of that information, I begin developing the equations that will allow me to control the vehicle from a distance. However, the equations get significantly more complex if I do not make certain assumptions about the motion of the vehicle.

So, I decide to make the assumption that the car will have 100% traction as it travels down this strip of road. In other words, I assume that it will never slide from side to side or skid—an assumption which could save me a lot of extra time and money. I check the weather report for road conditions and determine that skidding conditions are unlikely during the testing period. The assumption that I will have 100% traction, and can eliminate those variables pertaining to traction from my equations, is a reasonable one—one that will not cause significant error in my equations. There may be a few small rocks on the road, or a heavy gust of wind that might cause a very small amount of error due to my assumption, but by the end of the one mile strip of road, I can maintain, with a very high degree of confidence, that the car will likely still be on the road and very close to the location that I anticipate.

What if I were to take this same remote control vehicle, with the same assumptions in place, and use it in an off-road setting—out in the middle of nowhere, with no road, and on extremely rough terrain? Would the assumption that there will be 100% traction be a reasonable assumption in that setting—one that would not cause a significant amount of error in my equations? How likely would it be that I will know exactly where my car is by the end of one mile of off-road navigation?

Assumptions often have to be made in science, but those assumptions have to be made very carefully or the end results can be significantly affected. Invalid assumptions can cause the scientist to draw conclusions that are not in keeping with the

actual evidence. The key for the scientist is to make assumptions that are reasonable and that do not significantly alter the end results. The problem is that **much of the alleged evidence for evolution has been gathered under unsubstantiated, unreasonable, and even false assumptions that contradict the actual evidence.**

Unreasonable Assumption I: Abiogenesis

Consider, for instance, the assumption of abiogenesis. In 1960, G.A. Kerkut published *The Implications of Evolution*. Therein he listed seven **non-provable assumptions** upon which evolution is based. “The first assumption is that non-living things gave rise to living material, i.e., spontaneous generation occurred” (p. 6). Evolutionary geologist Robert Hazen, who received a Ph.D. in Earth Science from Harvard, is a research scientist at the Carnegie Institution of Washington’s Geophysical Laboratory and a professor of Earth Science at George Mason University. In his lecture series, *Origins of Life*, Hazen said:

In this lecture series I make a basic **assumption** that life emerged by some kind of **natural process**. I propose that life arose by a sequence of events that are completely consistent with the **natural laws** of chemistry and physics. **In this assumption I am like most other scientists.** I believe in a universe that is ordered by these **natural laws**. Like other scientists, I rely on the power of **observations and experiments** and theoretical reasoning to understand how the cosmos came to be the way it is (2005, emp. added).

The entire discipline of evolutionary biology is built on the **assumption** of abiogenesis. But is abiogenesis a reasonable assumption? Is there any evidence to support the assertion that life could come from non-life? Absolutely not. Quite the contrary. There has never been a scrap of empirical evidence that shows that such a thing could happen. In fact, there is a scientific law which prohibits the idea (see Miller, 2012c). The assumption of abiogenesis, upon which evolution stands, is unreasonable and should cause the scientist to scrap the idea in favor of one that does not require such an outlandish assumption.

Unreasonable Assumption 2: Uniformitarianism

What about uniformitarianism? According to the *McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Scientific and Technical Terms*, “uniformitarianism” is

the concept that the present is the key to the past; the principle that contemporary geologic processes have occurred in the same regular manner and with essentially the same intensity throughout geologic time, and that events of the geologic past can be explained by phenomena observable today (2003, p. 2224).

Uniformitarianism is a fundamental assumption of evolutionary geology. Much of the alleged evidence for deep time—an extremely old age of the Earth and Universe—is based on the principle of uniformitarianism. But is it reasonable to assume that all, or even the majority, of “the events of the geologic past can be explained by phenomena observable today”? How could one possibly make such an assertion? How could one know whether or not something catastrophic happened, perhaps only once in history, that would have, for instance, completely altered the geologic strata? The idea of “catastrophism,” to which creationists subscribe, allows for such phenomena, and is a much more reasonable assumption upon which to interpret geologic evidence.

Consider, as one example of the effect of catastrophic events on geologic phenomena, recent scientific discoveries concerning rapid petrification. For years it had been assumed that the process of petrification is a uniformitarian process that takes millions of years to complete. However, in 2004, five Japanese scientists published research in the journal *Sedimentary Geology* which casts doubt on that assumption. The team studied mineral rich, acidic water from the explosion crater of the Tatayama volcano in central Japan—water which runs over the edge of the volcano as a waterfall. Wood had fallen in the path of the water. The surprising discovery was that the wood had become petrified with silica after only 36 years as the water flowed over the wood (Akahane, et al., 2004).

As a further investigation of this phenomenon, the scientists attached pieces of wood to wire and placed them into the water flow.

After only seven years, the wood had turned to stone—petrified with silica. Wood petrification had occurred due to the nearby volcanic activity as well. Using a scanning electron microscope, they found that silica petrification occurs in the same way that the wood petrification occurred in the volcanic ash near the volcano (Akahane, et al.). This single discovery completely contradicts the assumption of uniformitarianism, and yet many more could be cited. Catastrophism, on the other hand, is much more reasonable, since it allows for catastrophic events such as volcanoes, meteors, and floods.

Unreasonable Assumptions 3, 4, & 5: Basis of Dating Techniques

The Second Law of Thermodynamics tells us that the Universe is running down or wearing out. We are running out of usable energy. Matter, itself, is breaking down. Various elements break down into other elements over time, and the breakdown appears to be at constant rates today. Scientists are able to measure the rate at which parent isotopes decay into daughter isotopes with an amazing degree of accuracy. This ability is an amazing technological feat, unsurpassed in known human history. However, a major issue arises based on what evolutionary geologists do with the information that they gather from this process. Using the known decay rates of the elements they are studying, evolutionary

geologists extrapolate backwards in time to try to determine how old a specimen is.

While this procedure might seem reasonable on the surface, there are significant issues with this practice. The older a specimen is said to be, the more inaccurate the dating technique is known to be. The margin of error grows higher and higher. One reason scientists are aware of this fact is because different dating techniques are often used to date the same specimen, and completely different ages result—often differing by millions of years. It is reasonable to conclude that the primary reason for this discrepancy is the effect of unrealistic assumptions that initiate the process of age extrapolation (cf. Kulp, 1952, p. 261; McDougall and Harrison, 1999, pp. 10-11; Friedlander, et al., 1981 for a discussion of the various assumptions inherent in the dating techniques). Ironically, the evolutionary geologists, themselves, acknowledge that “violations” of the assumptions “are not uncommon” (McDougall and Harrison, p. 11).

One major assumption upon which radiometric dating techniques are based is that, while a specimen might currently have various daughter elements in it, it is assumed that no daughter element existed in the specimen at the beginning of its decay. In other words, the dating technique assumes that the rock was initially completely composed of the parent element. But how could

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one possibly substantiate an assumption about the initial conditions of a specimen's decay process, especially when the commencement of its decay was hundreds or thousands (or according to evolutionists, **millions or billions**) of years ago? Is it not possible, and even likely, that a specimen might have been initially composed of more than one element that blended together during a geologic phenomenon before that rock's decay processes began? Is it not possible that various rocks were even created by God from the outset, composed of more than one daughter element, due to the usefulness of having those elements already in existence, rather than awaiting their emergence through decay processes? How could one possibly conclusively assert that any specimen was initially composed **only** of the parent element?

A second assumption upon which radiometric dating techniques are based is that the amounts of parent and daughter isotopes in a specimen have not been altered during the decay process by anything except radioactive decay. So, according to this assumption, the specimen being examined is in a closed system. In other words, the amount of the elements present in a sample have not ever been affected by outside elements. But how likely is it that in thousands of years of geologic processes (or even worse, millions of years, again, according to evolutionists)—lava flows, floods, mudslides, meteorite activity, etc.—the amounts of the various elements in a specimen have not been affected by outside forces?

Evolutionary geologists, again, recognize that this assumption oftentimes does not hold up. According to Ian McDougall, professor of geology in the Research School of Earth Sciences at the Australian National University, and T. Mark Harrison, professor of geology in the Department of Earth and Space Sciences at the University of California, Los Angeles, “Departures from this assumption in fact are **quite common**, particularly in areas of complex geological history” (1999, p. 11, emp. added). To suggest a closed system for a specimen that is believed to be very old is a reckless, unreasonable assumption, (1) when there is clear evidence that a closed system cannot be guaranteed, and (2) when, in fact, there is compelling evidence that ancient

Earth was rocked by a global catastrophe that most certainly would have violated the “closed system” assumption (cf. Whitcomb and Morris, 1961) and created an extremely “complex geological history.”

The third assumption of such dating techniques is that, in keeping with uniformitarian principles, the nuclear decay rate of the elements being measured have remained constant throughout history. While the other assumptions can be seen on the surface to be unsustainable, the problem with this assumption might not seem as evident at first glance. One might expect that the rate of decay of various elements would be “set in stone” as it were—more like scientific laws. However, recent research by a team of scientists (known as RATE) that was presented at the International Conference on Creationism in 2003, indicates that the nuclear decay rates have not always been constant (Humphreys, et al., 2003). The RATE team had several zircon crystals dated by expert evolutionists using the uranium-lead evolutionary dating technique and found them to be 1.5 billion years old, assuming a constant decay rate. A by-product of the breakdown of uranium into lead is helium. Content analysis of the crystals revealed that large amounts of helium were found to be present. However, if the crystals were as old as the dating techniques suggested, there should have been **no trace** of helium left, since helium atoms are known to be tiny, light, unreactive, and able to easily escape from the spaces within the crystal structure. The presence of helium and carbon-14 showed that the rocks were actually much younger (4,000 to 14,000 years old) than the dating techniques alleged. Since these zircons were taken from the Precambrian basement granite in the Earth, an implication of the find is that the whole Earth could be no older than 4,000 to 14,000 years old. The results of the crystal dating indicate that 1.5 billion years’ worth of radioactive decay, based on the uniformitarian constant decay rate assumption, occurred in only a few thousand years. How could such a thing be possible? How can the two dating techniques be reconciled? By understanding that the rate of decay of uranium into lead must have been different—much higher—in the past (cf. DeYoung, 2005).

Evolutionists have no qualms openly acknowledging the assumptions inherent in evolutionary dating techniques, since without these assumptions in place, there would be no way to date the Earth or anything on it using science. The standard practice of geologists today, in light of this, is to “do what you can with what you have.” However, if the dating assumptions are too unrealistic to allow for an accurate date of anything, shouldn’t the dating methods be deemed untrustworthy or even abandoned, if that is where the evidence leads? It makes no sense to ignore the issues and accept evolution as fact along with its deep time proposition based on such faulty evidence. How is it scientific to use such dating methods in spite of the near certainty that they will not provide accuracy when dating extremely old specimens? In truth, because of the effect of catastrophic activity on the Earth over the centuries, the only sure way to attain the date of the Earth and its elements is through divine revelation. However, as the next assumption shows, that reasonable option has been eliminated from the table as well, due to evolutionary assumptions.

Unreasonable Assumption 6: Naturalism

According to the National Academy of Sciences, “The statements of science must invoke only **natural** things and processes. The statements of science are those that emerge from the application of human intelligence to data obtained from **observation and experiment**” (*Teaching About Evolution...*, 1998, p. 42, emp. added). So according to this modern definition of “science,” anything non-natural is ruled out. In other words, science must be approached through the assumption of naturalism and materialism. Therefore, God is deemed unscientific by this definition (even though He actually instituted the field of science, cf. Miller, 2012d), since He is non-natural and non-material.

Recall the earlier concurring statements by geologist Robert Hazen of the Carnegie Institution, in which he stated that he assumes that life came about through a “natural process...completely consistent with natural laws.... Like other scientists, I rely on the power of observations and experiments and theoretical reasoning to understand how the cosmos came to be

(cont. on p. 69)

“Driven by a Lust for Headlines”

Eric Lyons. M.Min.

Apologetics Press has written extensively through the years about the unsubstantiated claims scientists frequently make about dinosaurs and their alleged testimony for the General Theory of Evolution (see Lyons and Butt, 2008). Evolutionary scientists, eager to introduce the world to the latest alleged multi-million-year-old dinosaur, frequently make assertions without adequate evidence. Nevertheless, month after month, year after year, the claims are made: “this dinosaur evolved 200 million years ago,” “that dinosaur evolved into a bird,” “no large mammals lived during the time of the dinosaurs,” etc. Although many evolutionists find it difficult to see why creationists so often are skeptical about the “latest and greatest” dinosaur claims, mounting evidence is confirming what many creationists have suspected for years: evolutionary scientists are “driven by a lust for headlines.”

In a speech delivered in Vancouver, Canada in November 2011 by Jack Horner (the most famous dinosaur fossil hunter in the world), he admitted that “scientists have egos” (2011), and those egos have driven evolutionists to “discover” and “allege” things that are not what the evidence actually demands. In fact, Sascha Vongehr summarized Horner’s speech (about the misidentification of several dinosaurs), saying, “Scientists have a big huge ego and are therefore some of the easiest fooled people around” (2012; cf. Proverbs 16:18).

Rex Dalton, a longtime writer for the journal *Nature*, penned these words in 2008: “One hundred and thirty-five years of **questionable judgments**, some **driven by a lust for headlines**, have left dinosaur nomenclature in **disarray**, according to two new studies” (2008, emp. added). The studies, conducted by paleontologist Michael Benton of the University of Bristol, England, revealed that “there are errors in **almost half** the names given to dinosaurs” (as quoted in Dalton, emp. added). In fact, of the 1,401 names given to dinosaurs from 1824 to 2004, **48%** were either duplicates or “embodied errors of some other sort,” including “a lack of sufficient fossil material” (Dalton). Just how insufficient? According to Peter Dodson of the University of Pennsylvania, in 1990, almost half (45.3%) of all dinosaur genera were based on a **single** fossil specimen, and 74% were represented by five specimens or less (1990, 87:7608). No wonder so many errors have been made!

Dalton and the scientists he interviewed referred to the extent of the problems as “scary,” “bad,” and “a shock.” Why so many shocking mistakes regarding the naming and interpretation of dinosaur fossils? Why have scientists attempted to make so much out of so few fossil specimens? It is due in large part to pressures placed upon fossilologists by funding agencies and publishers. “As more public money came

to be used for exploration projects...there was a growing risk that funding-agency and journal pressures might lead to unnecessary naming of genera or species” (Dalton; cf. 1 Timothy 6:10). Dalton said this is exactly what happened—in the U.S. and abroad. During the last 30 years of the 19th century, fossil hunter Othniel Marsh named 80 dinosaurs. Unsurprisingly, this man, who worked so feverishly in hopes of becoming “America’s king of the dinosaurs” (Dalton), had a very poor success rate. Of the 80 dinosaurs he named, **only 23** are still valid.

Consider another dinosaur fossil hunter: Dong Zhiming of China. Thirty-six percent of the dinosaurs he named from 1973-2004 are now considered invalid. As might be expected, his early work “was done when there was pressure on Chinese scientists to discover new species” (Dalton).

Sadly, countless erroneous and misleading claims about dinosaurs have come to pass because of “a lust for headlines.” Many interpretations of dinosaur fossils once thought to be iron-clad have been shown time and again to be flawed. “[S]ome species turn out not even to be dinosaurs” (Corbyn, 2010). And those fossils that are from dinosaurs **have never been proven** to be millions of years older than humans, as is constantly alleged. Evolutionists have never come close to proving that fish evolved into dinosaurs or that dinosaurs evolved into birds (Lyons, 2010). What has repeatedly been the case for the last century is that today’s “great proof for evolution” is often tomorrow’s back-page retraction.

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Q: “Can God do everything?”

A: Both Christians and atheists generally have assumed that if the God depicted in the Bible exists, He can do **anything**—since He is represented as being all-powerful. However, this assumption is incorrect. The Bible does not claim that the omnipotence of God implies that He can do anything and everything. In reality, “omnipotence” by definition does not, and cannot, apply to that which does not lend itself to power. Skeptics and atheists have posed queries that they feel nullify the notion of omnipotence, thereby demonstrating the nonexistence of God. For example, “Can God create a boulder so large that He, Himself, cannot lift it?”

Separate and apart from the fact that God is not, Himself, physical, and that He created the entire physical Universe, though He is metaphysical and transcendent of the Universe, the question is a **conceptual absurdity**. It’s like asking, “Can God create a round square or a four-sided triangle?” No, He cannot—but not for the reasons implied by the atheist: that He does not exist or that He is not omnipotent. Rather, it is because the question is, itself, **self-contradictory and incoherent**. It is nonsensical terminology. Rather than saying God **cannot** do such things, it would be more in harmony with reality to say that such things simply **cannot be done at all**. God is infinite in power, but power meaningfully relates only to what can be done, to what is **possible** of accomplishment—**not** to what is **impossible**! It is absurd to speak of any power (even **infinite** power) being able to do what simply **cannot** be done. Logical absurdities do not lend themselves to being accomplished, and so, are not subject to power, not even to **infinite** power (see Warren, 1972, pp. 27ff.).

Further, to suggest that God is deficient or limited in power if He cannot create a rock so large that He cannot lift, is to imply that He **could** do so if He simply had **more** power. But this is false. Creating a rock that He, Himself, cannot lift, or creating a four-sided triangle, or making a ball that is at the same time both white all over and black all over, or creating a 90-year-old teenager, or making a car that is larger on the inside than it is on the outside—to propose such things is to affirm logical contradictions and absurdities. Such propositions do not really say anything at all. Though one can imagine logical absurdities that cannot be accomplished, they do not constitute a telling blow against the view that God is infinite in power.

So, no, the concept of “omnipotence” does not mean that there are no limits to what an omnipotent being can do. While God **can** do

whatever is **possible** to be done, in reality, He **will** do only what is in harmony with His nature. In fact, the Bible pinpoints specific things that God **cannot** do. For example, the Bible states unequivocally that God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; 2 Timothy 2:13; Titus 1:2). He is a Being whose very essence entails truthfulness. Falsehood is completely out of harmony with His divine nature.

Another impossibility pertaining to God’s power is the fact that He shows no partiality or favoritism (Deuteronomy 10:17; Romans 2:11; Colossians 3:25; 1 Peter 1:17). He is “open and above board”—evenhanded—with all His creatures. He can be counted on to interact with human beings as He said He would. His treatment of us centers on our own self-chosen behavior—not on our ethnicity or skin color (Acts 10:34-35; 1 Samuel 16:7).

A third instance that qualifies the meaning of “omnipotent” is seen in God’s inability to forgive the individual who will not repent and forsake sin (Joshua 24:19; Proverbs 28:13; Matthew 6:15; 18:35; Luke 13:3,5). As great and as magnificent as the mercy and forgiveness of God are, it is impossible for Him to bestow forgiveness upon the person who does not seek that forgiveness by meeting the pre-conditions of remission. God is literally powerless to bestow forgiveness through any other avenue than the blood of Jesus and obedience to the Gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16; 2:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17; John 3:5).

The more one studies the Bible, examining the attributes and characteristics of the God depicted there, the more one is struck with (1) the inspiration of the Bible—since its skillful handling of such matters places it beyond the charge of successful contradiction, and (2) awe at the infinitude of God. Not one of the factors discussed in this article reflects adversely upon the reality of God’s omnipotence. But it is abundantly clear that a person may so live as to render the God of heaven incapable of coming to that person’s aid. It is imperative that every human being recognizes the need to understand His will and to conform one’s behavior to that will. It is imperative that every individual avoid placing self in the precarious position of being in need of **that which God cannot do**.

Dave Miller

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the way it is" (2005). Richard Lewontin, evolutionary geneticist of Harvard University, unabashedly said:

Our willingness to accept scientific claims **against common sense** is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science **in spite** of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, **in spite** of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, **in spite** of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a **commitment to naturalism**. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that **we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes** to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, **no matter how counter-intuitive**, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, **that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door** (1997, p. 31, 2nd-4th emp. in orig.).

So regardless of the evidence, the bulk of today's scientific community has agreed to wipe God and supernatural phenomena out of the definition of "science," not because of the evidence for or against God, but because of the **assumption** of naturalism. Again we ask, is this a reasonable assumption?

Remember that not all assumptions in science are unreasonable. If an assumption does not significantly alter the end results, it may be a fair, legitimate assumption. However, the assumption of naturalism significantly alters one's results—yielding completely different answers to important questions compared to the answers that would be given using an approach without that assumption in place. Further, the assumption of naturalism proves to be unreasonable, first, because it is not in keeping with the evidence, and, second, because it is self-contradictory.

According to science—the First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics—**in nature**, nothing comes from nothing and nothing lasts forever (cf. Miller, 2013). So according to the scientific evidence, in order to explain the origin of everything in the

Universe, since it could not have **naturally** lasted forever or come from nothing, it had to have come from Something outside of "nature"—outside of the Universe. According to the Law of Biogenesis, **in nature**, life comes only from life and that of its kind (cf. Miller, 2012c). So again, according to the scientific evidence, since life could not have **naturally** come from nothing, it had to have come from Something outside of "nature"—outside the Universe. Naturalism does not work in explaining the scientific evidence on these points. It cannot offer an explanation for the origin of the Universe or life in keeping with the evidence. So would it not be reasonable to re-define "science" in such a way that no option is eliminated from consideration based on the faulty assumption of naturalism?

If the scientific evidence points to something, i.e., Someone, supernatural, why not be allowed as scientists to follow the evidence where it leads? Just because one cannot empirically observe something happening, does not mean that one cannot use science to determine who did what, how they did it, when they did it, where they did it, and with what they did it. Forensic scientists engage in this process every day. Indirect evidence is a legitimate source of scientific information, and the Universe is saturated with indirect evidence for the existence of God.

As an approach to science, naturalism contradicts the scientific evidence, and what's more, it contradicts itself. The naturalist says that everything must be explained through **natural** processes. However, naturalism requires **unnatural** phenomena—like abiogenesis and the spontaneous generation or eternity of matter—in order to explain the origin of the Universe and life (cf. Miller, 2012a). Such things not only have **not** been witnessed by scientists, but in fact, all the scientific evidence is contrary to them. How can a self-contradictory approach to science be the very perspective that defines science? Why are simple logic and common sense being rejected by so many in the scientific community today?

CONCLUSION

ASSUMPTIONS are oftentimes necessary in operational science, and they can be effective and productive in

helping scientists to solve problems and make advancements and important breakthroughs; but assumptions must be made with caution. The evolutionary community has a strangle-hold on the minds of many in the scientific community today and, all the while, evolution is riddled with issues, many of which come down to the fundamental assumptions upon which evolution is based. Why do so many people insist on making such far-fetched, unreasonable assumptions? In the words of Scottish philosopher David Hume, "No man turns against reason until reason turns against him" (as quoted in Warren, 1982, p. 4). Many have turned against reason in spite of the evidence, since the evidence has turned against them. But why be so irrational? Why continue to hold to such a bogus, baseless, irrational theory? The reason for most of humanity's rejection of truth throughout human history was stated succinctly by God through Paul nearly 2,000 years ago. Some people simply do "not like to retain God in their knowledge," because His restrictions, though given for our good (cf. Romans 7:12; Deuteronomy 6:24; 10:12-13; Psalm 119), tend not to harmonize with our fleshly desires (Romans 1:20-32).

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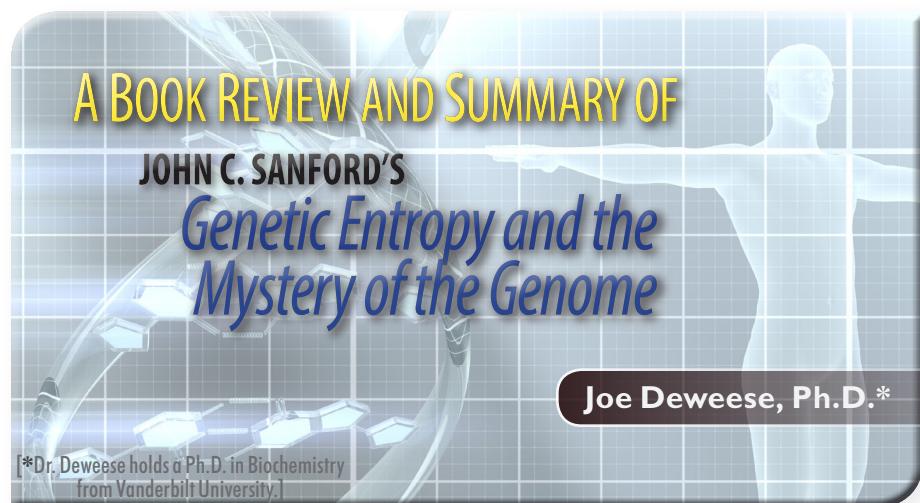
A BOOK REVIEW AND SUMMARY OF

JOHN C. SANFORD'S

Genetic Entropy and the Mystery of the Genome

Joe Deweese, Ph.D.*

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DR. John Sanford is a plant geneticist and inventor who conducted research at Cornell University for more than 25 years. He is best known for significant contributions to the field of transgenic crops, including the invention of the biolistic process ("gene gun"). Like many in his profession, he was fully invested in what he terms the "Primary Axiom" of modern science, namely that "man is merely the product of *random mutations plus natural selection*" (Sanford, 2008, p. v, italics in orig.). He argues that this cornerstone of modern Darwinism is almost universally accepted and rarely, if ever, questioned. In *Genetic Entropy and the Mystery of the Genome*, Sanford proceeds, not only to question the Primary Axiom, but to expose completely the faulty genetic framework upon which the ideology is built.

In the first portion of the book, Sanford builds an analogy for the reader to make complex genetic concepts more palatable to non-scientists. He uses the analogy of comparing our genome—the sum total of all of our genetic makeup—with an instruction manual. The DNA sequences that make up our genes, gene regulatory elements, chromosomes, etc., are compared with letters, words, chapters, and volumes. [NOTE: The term "gene" is not to be taken as synonymous with "trait." Mendelian genetics dealt in "traits" (e.g., blue eyes) that were defined as "genes." Our modern understanding of genetics demonstrates that while many genes impact phenotype (observable traits), genes are not the same as traits.] He builds on this analogy throughout the book using several powerful illustrations.

When we view the genome as an instruction manual, it is not hard to imagine how

instructions in that manual may change simply by randomly changing letters in the manual. These changes are analogous to the random changes in our genome that are referred to as **mutations**. Mutations can be as simple as a single "letter" (i.e., a nucleotide) being changed or as major as the loss or duplication of an entire "book" (i.e., a chromosome). Our genome includes six billion "letters" split into 46 "volumes" (in a typical body cell; 23 chromosomes in reproductive cells). It is clear, though, that randomly changing letters in an instruction manual would not provide new and useful information.

Sanford argues that, based upon modern scientific evidence and the calculations of population geneticists (who are almost exclusively evolutionists), mutations are occurring at an alarmingly high rate in our genome and that the vast majority of all mutations are either harmful or "nearly-neutral" (meaning a loss for the organism or having no discernible fitness gain). Importantly, Sanford also establishes the extreme rarity of any type of beneficial mutations in comparison with harmful or "nearly-neutral" mutations. Indeed, "beneficial" mutations are so exceedingly rare as to not contribute in any meaningful way. [NOTE: "Beneficial" mutations do not necessarily result from a gain in information, but instead, these changes predominantly involve a net loss of function to the organism, which is also not helpful to the Primary Axiom; see Behe, 2010, pp. 419-445.] Sanford concludes that the frequency and generally harmful or neutral nature of mutations prevents them from being useful to any scheme of random evolution.

Using his analogy, imagine a manual for assembling a child's wagon. Would

randomly changing letters in the manual improve the manual? Would duplicating sections of the manual improve it? Clearly these types of changes would destroy information rather than create new information (having two copies of the same information is not necessarily of benefit, since there is no real mechanism to preserve one copy while mutating another). But Sanford extends the analogy further. He suggests that the Primary Axiom assumes that such random changes not only could change the wagon, but these random “mutations” would evolve the wagon into a car and eventually a plane, and then even a space shuttle. No one would argue that random changes in the manual for a wagon would eventually give rise to instructions for a space shuttle. However, Sanford argues this is exactly the situation with regard to our genome. If we regard “early” life forms in an evolutionary context as being the wagon, humans would easily be a space shuttle by comparison!

In the next section of the book, Sanford examines natural selection and asks whether “nature” can “select” in favor of the exceedingly rare “beneficial” mutations and against the deleterious mutations. The concept of natural selection is generally that the organisms that are best adapted to their environment will survive and reproduce, while the less fit will not. Sanford points out that this may be the case with some organisms, but more commonly, selection involves chance and luck. But could this process select against harmful mutations and allow less harmful or even beneficial mutations to thrive? According to Sanford, there are significant challenges to this notion. One major issue is the cost of selection. The cost of selection means that a portion of a population must be “spent” (i.e., removed) in order to “pay” for the selection process. To put this idea in human terms, what percentage of the population could be removed (or kept from reproducing) in order to promote selection? The numbers are exceedingly high according to Sanford—possibly higher than 50%—which would be completely unrealistic in any society today. Another issue is the “blind” nature of the process. Nature cannot “see” what potential future organisms could exist, and therefore, there is no means for selecting for or against traits to achieve any future goals. Sanford concludes that selection cannot overcome the accumulation of harmful mutations and has no real power to keep “beneficial” mutations around, due to the extreme

rarity of those mutations and the fact that selection is blind. Thus, even with the ability to select—artificially or otherwise—the accumulation of mutations continues unabated.

In the final section of the book, Sanford illustrates the dire situation of the human genome. Imagine an instruction manual of tens of thousands of pages in which random changes have been made every time it is copied. Who would trust such a manual? How many changes would it take to make the manual unusable? How long before the manual no longer makes a functional product? It is a testimony to the nature of our genome that we are still alive in spite of the level of decay. Again, Sanford points to the accumulation of deleterious mutations and argues that our genomes are not evolving to something greater; we are decaying and degenerating. In other words, our genomes at one point were in far better shape than they are at present. The decay process has taken a huge toll. This process he terms “genetic entropy.” He suggests that this decay trend is not only real, but it is an inevitable result of the random, natural accumulation of mutations in our genome. Thus, not only do mutations lead to decay, they do not lead to any meaningful increase in information—which is absolutely required by the Primary Axiom. In order for organisms to evolve from one form to another, new genetic information is needed in order to provide “instructions” for building the proteins and other features of the organism. Sanford clearly establishes that

any expectation of getting new, useful information from these random processes is a completely blind trust in an impotent process. His book also provides an appendix with several more arguments against the Primary Axiom, along with answers to some counterarguments.

In conclusion, Sanford’s book builds a strong case against the Primary Axiom using modern scientific information combined with powerful, yet simple, logic. His arguments are solid but written on a level that can be understood by students and non-scientists. He clarifies several misconceptions about mutations, natural selection, and the overall decay of the genome. He accurately describes the concept and reality of genetic entropy, and he concludes from that principle our dependence upon the One who designed everything. Rather than viewing life as a purposeless by-product of the Primary Axiom, Sanford argues that genetic entropy points us to our need for and reliance upon God as the Creator. Perhaps this system of genetic decay is simply one more way God reminds us of the Fall (Genesis 3) and of our complete dependence upon Him.

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June 10-11
June 16-28

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Oakman, AL (205) 686-9079
Panama (229) 292-4708

Eric Lyons

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June 9-14
June 18-19

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June 10-12, 26
June 13

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Jeff Miller

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June 9-14
June 19

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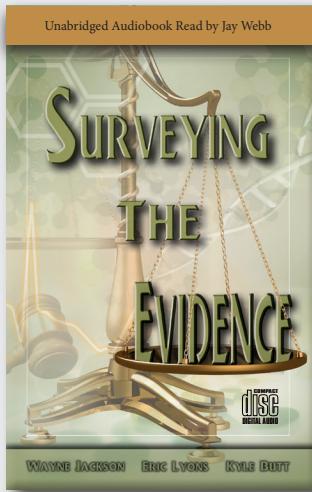
NOTE FROM *The Editor*



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Dave Miller

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